Movement and Movements

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Speculative Ethnographies

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WHAT IF…

What if movement, movements

What if the experience of receiving through dance, of opening

What if free your ass and your mind will follow

What if whole body-being writing

What if the implicit/explicit rules of writing on of and in "the field" could be dissolved in service to vivid colors that emerge through accessing life force, through following creative sparks?

What if writing as color?

What if earth, racial justice, what if land back?

What if sharing , whose sharing?

What if a garden sense?[1]

What if words could touch the livingness of measurement

What if right relation as living, breathing, negotiating, unfolding?

What if settler-colonialism was understood as a sensational field, as a practice, not only structural, nor invisible

What if words did not conspire to enclose, if land, 2

What if this list, like a stream, could somehow move into geometry?[2]

What if new formations?

What if un-forming, re-forming

What if all the enactments, the writings, the justice songs, the dances made matter enough, weighed enough, were weighted enough, were surging like waves

What if territory what if land what if earth

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[1] "Garden is the right place as it already has the qualities of human**,** nature and Life, and can give space and time so that all the diversity of cultures in the world can speak without pressure by their creation as a being." From '*Web Art Garden – an Idea*' by Suprapto Suryodarmo, first published in 1997 for ACE: Art Culture Environment initiative for annual cultural events around the world on the 5th June World Environment Day. Facilitators Sandra Reeve and Suprapto Suryodarmo.

[2] A few days ago, I was listening to some audio recordings from 2017 by my movement teacher Suprapto Suryodarmo who passed away in 2019; he said something then similar to the line above, which I have just written, which in fact is an idea I have been working with for years. Who wrote this? Who thought it? Was it thought co-arising? To quote Audre Lorde: "There are no new ideas. There are only new ways of making them felt," I read the quotation in Bergman, Carla and Montgomery, Nick, *Joyful Militancy: Building Thriving Resistance in Toxic Time.* Chico, CA: AK Press, 2017; it is from *Sister Outsider* and her lecture "Learning from the 60's," (1982). After twenty years of practice, how are these ideas and approaches called Amerta Movement, enmeshed in how I tell a story, or in the compositional practice *tuning scores*, or the many forms of dance? My body-being is seeped in years of practice. These are where the stories I tell come alive.

What if collective liberation

What if pulsing

Rupture, reckoning

WHAT IF THE UNKNOWN

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I am curious about a piece of land and the practices on it, what my responsibility is to it, and how I can contribute to a radical reparative reimagining of that 125 acres of native Nipmuc, Pocumtuc, and Wabanaki Confederacy land, in so-called Western Massachusetts. For whom is that land?

My experiences with Earthdance span over almost thirty years more often off than on. I went there first in the summer of 1993 for a weekend dance gathering, bowled over at the freedom of expression, the mud-rubbing and rolling. Then, as co-director more than 10 years later, my approach was to use organizing and the power of that position to contribute through creative projects, embedding anti-racist and feminist consciousnesses through co-programming, mission, dialogue, and infrastructural changes. There was a lot of warriorship on my part and to be honest, my health took a turn in that role.

Indeed we are all in the muck together, and sometimes it seems as if there is nothing to do but grieve, really take the time and feel the resistance of white people / settler-colonizers holding on to massive vestiges of privilege and receive the harm it brings. These months I have been in touch with BIPOC friends and colleagues who are closer in. The repair can't rest on solely initiated and lit by them.

The thing is, in so many ways it didn't feel good to be at the Center, so I left, finding other places for my practices to flourish. But I am experiencing the gaps in this approach more deeply, —the privilege of being able to relocate, the lack of investment and isolation that arises from internalizing the isolation and perfectionism of whiteness, supremacy, and how the opportunism I enact is rooted in discovery, how the devastation and apocalyptic harm that comes from ongoing dispossession. I now see even more so the necessity of centering a decolonial approach, practicing right relationship with Earthance land in a way I just did not understand then, where I am not a direct stakeholder but have some more nebulous relationship.

Earthdance was started by a bunch of rebel hippy dancers back in 1986 as a commune, an escape from the city (Boston), a place to live collectively. The group was mostly white, though key BIPOC people were involved in its earliest growth. Later in the 1990's it became a non-profit improvisational dance center like nothing of its kind, and it is a cherished dance center to many internationally, and a place that for so many others is a minefield, especially BIPOC people, queer people, disabled people, and other marginalized groups.

Oh dance, so few infrastructures, nonprofits and small organisms working so hard to stay afloat, embedded in white supremacy, with implicit biases so thick it's the air breathed, wrested on stolen land.

What does it mean to own land? What is the responsibility in ownership? What are some possibilities for opening up a piece of land so that it could be unsettled, and the original peoples of that land could have access, could could have the #landback? I remember when I worked at Earthdance how the territory was open in some ways,—there are no fences— how

folks who had a mineral resource book could call, come and extract Rhodonite and other gems and stones. Or rent the space or a cottage, or come to some of the free and sliding scale events. Who has access to this community and who feels a capacity to be there in their own sovereignty? In the powerful work of Pawnee attorney, author, and tribal leader Walter Echo Hawk, he makes the case for the importance of learning the legal history of land and gaining ownership of Native American materials and intellectual property, thereby using the dominant system's tool for land justice.[3]

How could Earthdance be a model for the collective consciousness and racial reckoning taking place in the U.S. and globally, inspired by radical activism of Movement for Black Lives, anti-colonial efforts, and abolition movements becoming more potent each day? How could a place dedicated to community practice and ecological consciousness create *new landings* for a just transition? What would it mean, land back, and how could this community offer a model as an action in the experimental dance community, not just in an email or a meeting response when the next crisis hits? POC consultants are hired and they neither have the power nor are their full recommendations enacted. Again and again.

Karyn Recollet (Urban Cree): "You see space, particularly dark matter, is my jam. And dark matter is magic; it is that wondrous active presence that is moving, vibrating, surging...formulating, ideating, creating...."[4]

What is the feel of emanation from a source? In attuning to the vibration of spaces and places, how does leadership affect a group, the future, how is facilitation bound or open? Dark

[3] Echo Hawk, Walter, *In the Light of Justice: The Rise of Human Rights in Native America and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.* Golden, CO: Fulcrum Press, 2013.
[4] Karyn Recollet on "Kinstillatory Gathering" and the complexities of land and belonging. *C* Issue 136 "Site/Ation." https://cmagazine.com/issues/136/kinstillatory-gathering

matter has the quality of magnetizing, rather than making boundaries, or making walls. It is totipotence. “Epigenetic” “production” that can transform into what is needed.

Miriam Kaba, on abolition in *We Do This ‘Til We Free Us* states she doesn’t believe in allyship, is so bored with the concept of performativity; she said, “I only believe in strugglers, co-workers, ...in solidarity.” She speaks of relations, “If we can’t get along with each other, and we can’t take responsibility for what we do with each other, then what the hell are we doing?”[5]

Much of my time at Earthdance revolved around weaving collective liberation into the fabric of Earthdance programming, practice, and life. I was supported and trained by some great friends and colleagues. I want to name the late Julius Ford, and Gopi Krishna who lives across the road today, for their deep generosity in our work together. Together we co-founded what is now called the Julius Ford Harriet Tubman Healthy Living Community. At Earthdance, I also co-founded other ways of working towards justice, such as an arts and ecology festival in my time called *seeds*, addressing arts as a basis for new practices in earth, dance, and acknowledgement in order to upend ecological racism.

At the end of the final *seeds* festival in 2016, after months of solidarity work amongst the artists, curators, participants and with Earthdance leadership, workshops such as the BIPOC-only *Wrecking Walden*, the white accompliceship-based accompaniment *Embodying Allyship,* challenges amongst thirdspace peoples who didn’t feel the binary offered them place, residencies in art and ecology, discussions and panels on indigeneity and lineage in dance, a few of us sat in a pile after hours of dancing the last night and formulated a dream, to return the

[5] Kaba, Miriam. *We Do This ‘Til We Free Us: Abolitionist Organizing and Transforming Justice.* Chicago: Haymarket Books (2021).

land for arts and stewardship to black, POC, and indigenous people, … what could that even look like?

The dream settled, burrowed, composted, and this past year it is being given some collective airtime among a few of us gathered to share time in collective space and imagine, through phone and Zoom; no organizing, no planning, just listening to one another. Art as Prefiguration as Prayer. Through it there is a support network growing. I invited T, k, G, A and m to come together this fall to imagine Earthdance land to be given over to Black and Indigenous artists. A. resisted, had some real concerns, couldn't see herself there, and m. didn't want to set foot on Earthdance ever again, even in a Zoom-imagining space The polarities of those two say it all, a stakeholder / gatekeeper unavailable (what was indeed the tenderness of the moment and what was white resistance?) and yet another black person who won't return. T. is slowing down their hours, exhausted from the consulting work and being the only POC voice for equity. G has been asked by his family to not interact with Earthdance anymore. There is some reckoning and repair needed here.

I am committed to the possibility of reparations for Black Indigenous, and People of Color in dancing communities of which I am part in co-creating and on Earthdance land. There is an opportunity both in dance practice, in organizational practice, and in land ownership to be a model for radical reimagining of a just society in these times. It takes a depth of spiritual leadership and commitment from people in positions of power. This isn't easy, and it is only through supporting one another that communities can expand and grow, and in the case of settler-colonialism, come to terms with the fact that the very foundations of how we as settlers breathe, move, and make meaning are grounded in devastation and in the case of white land

owners, incommensurable privilege. The Indigenous and Native American lifeways can offer so much for understanding, and yet this requires a conscious land ethic, and most importantly developing real relationships with native peoples and their practices. As Eve Tuck and K Wayne Yang so beautifully expressed, decolonizing is not a metaphor.[6]

I am curious about poetics, how there is a kind of space that can open up in the creative pastiche of language, in dance, in dancing, and the studio, on land, how words provide an environment, a somatic incitement.

When I wrote about the projects that were built "on land," co-student Marie said, "things get tricky" in that space in between practice on land; she wondered, who was dispossessed?

In honor of Julius, of BIPOC peoples, of my own grief of supremacy, these tears are fertilizing the ground from which who knows what will spring.

What is my responsibility here, and how am I complicit years later? I spoke out in solidarity but my heart is breaking now again coming to terms again with the deep resistance, and allowing myself to feel it all again anew. It is so easy to walk away and start a new life; it's the white person trope. I feel myself coming around to the fact that I am still responsible in my spirit for a burning house.

I am haunted by this other thing Miriam Kaba said in an interview, how as an organizer she was trained to write anonymously, to obfuscate or diminish identity for the sake of the cause, and then, I wonder about this in relation to movement collective work, specifically in

[6] Tuck, Eve and Yang, K. Wayne. "Decolonization is Not a Metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society. Vol. 1, No. 1, 2012, pp. 1-40*

performance, where the implicit orientation is literally to be seen, and how Earthdance in so many ways has been a vector where these two kinds of positionalities intersected, alchemized, and offer community to so many— individualism and the universalizing collective. How Contact Improvisation culture and Western movement forms can deny differences in support of generalized connection to gravity, skeletal systems, the tabula rasa of the studio, uplifting dominant subcultural worldviews and denying indigenous worlding and sovereignty.[7] This complex of Identity, Collectivity, Sovereignty, Mutual Support, Inclusion, Improvisation and Performance, could use hours of dialogue.

> "Under capitalism the future is an open field ahead of us that we can shape and construct through our work. Since we're condemned to have a future, we're condemned to work, and at the same time, if you are condemned to work, you are condemned to have a future...If you want to avoid work, … you have to have a plan, a strategy."
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> —Valentina Desideri in "Fate Work"[8]

As in the article, "Fate Work: A Conversation," Stefano Harney (of influential *Undercommons* fame with Fred Moten) and dancer and performance artist Valentina Desederi have the kind of conversation that stretches, eludes, and elides time, reminds the reader of what is assumed, constructed, and what is at stake with the very notion of time and what it represents for labor, living, and sociality. This Urthback vision has its own kind of pace, a different kind of audience (for ancestors, the unknown?), a different relationship to place, one that is expansive, Way Out, that can compost, that changes and changes, releases from the tempo of Capital, but requires some reality checks. Collective dreaming isn't really owned by

[7] Kevin O'Connor in "Improvising within the field of settler colonialism on Indigenous land with Katelyn Stiles, Kevin O'Connor, Margit Galanter." *The Future of CI: A Three-Day International Online Conference.* April 23, 2021.
[8] Desideri, Valentina and Harney, Stefano, "Fate Work: A Conversation." (2013) *Ephemera: theory and politics in organization* 13, (1), 159-176. Research Collection Lee Kong Chian School of Business.

anyone. And yet what I am curious about is if the dream can hopefully at some point belong to everyone, and the land, greater access, right relation. What that form is is unknown, but perhaps I push forward a vision for the sake of opening up where it feels so dangerous to tread.